

index magazine **MONTREAL**

literature/performance

listings

Cover art by Daegan Fryklind

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София'с БРЗАЕТС

Homeless in Tutonaguy

by Robert Majzels

Talking Art

text-based visual art by:

Mathieu Beauséjour

Jean-Sébastien Huot

Michael Robinson

Siris

curated by Mathieu Beauséjour

with text by Peter Dubé

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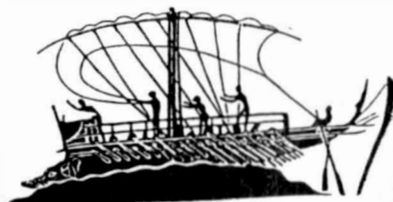
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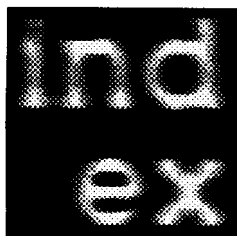
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editorial

i really don't know anything about coats at all

A funny thing happened to me on the way to an index meeting. One evening walking down the Main, between my ears Cobain's posthumous guitar in flames, when a man runs by me. Nearly knocks me over. Frantically running. I ignore him and keep walking. Just another fucked up weirdo going somewhere again. However, mere seconds later I catch up to him on the sidewalk. He is hunched over scooping slips of paper into a brown paper bag. He scoops with both hands as if he were doing the breast stroke. I realize it is money. Mostly two and five dollar bills. The man picks up the bag, stuffs it into his coat, and ducks into an alcove. I stroll by, taking a good look at him. I am a witness now, everything has changed.

I notice that he is missing his front teeth. He looks at me with fear in his eyes. Someone in my head tells me that he loves himself better than me. No surprise. As I pass the man he peels off his coat in an attempt to change his

appearance. He then conspicuously tears across the street, making use of a break in traffic. I follow him with my eyes. A boy dressed in a Pharmaprix uniform sprints after him and they disappear down a lane. I go back and check the discarded coat. I nudge it with my foot as if it were a dead animal. I think of the moral conundrum I will face if the money is there. Do I keep it? Suddenly being a witness implicates me. The lines that were drawn have become invisible. A coat filled with a cloud. The money is not there, although I don't look too hard.

I continue to walk down the Main. I turn the volume up on my walkman until the background traffic becomes inaudible. The denial... the denial... A few blocks later the coatless man and the Pharmaprix boy run by me. Cut me off and disappear down another alley, breathing hard. I yell at the boy, who has almost caught the man. I tell him about the dropped coat. The boy stops to catch his breath and listen to

my story. The thief gets away.

This is a surreal city at times. Anyone can step into the absurd. We have a need to be witnesses, to tell stories, to be implicated by our fictions. This is why I am involved with index. This is simply a document, like a note from a doctor, to justify why I was so late for the meeting that evening. Please forgive his tardiness, he was suddenly taken with a case of the absurd.

Andy brown

next month in index's double issue.

an interview with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and an excerpt from her new book.

& poetry by Adeena Karasick.

& much more...

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TALKING ART

Peter Dubé

In 1929 the Belgian painter René Magritte made a pun and the possible areas of activity in the visual arts were blown open. In that year the surrealist painted an absolutely banal representation of a pipe with the phrase "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (*"This is not a pipe"*) written directly below it. He titled the work *La Trahison des Images* (*The Betrayal of Images*). Though not his first work to incorporate textual elements, the year before he had made an ink drawing titled *L'Usage de la parole* (*The Use of Speech*) in which simple shapes were labeled with words and stood in for depicted objects, *La Trahison des Images* is unique, and uniquely important. By joining conventionalized naturalistic painting to a referential text with neither element carrying a greater weight of signification Magritte created an object defined by its deliberate ambiguity.

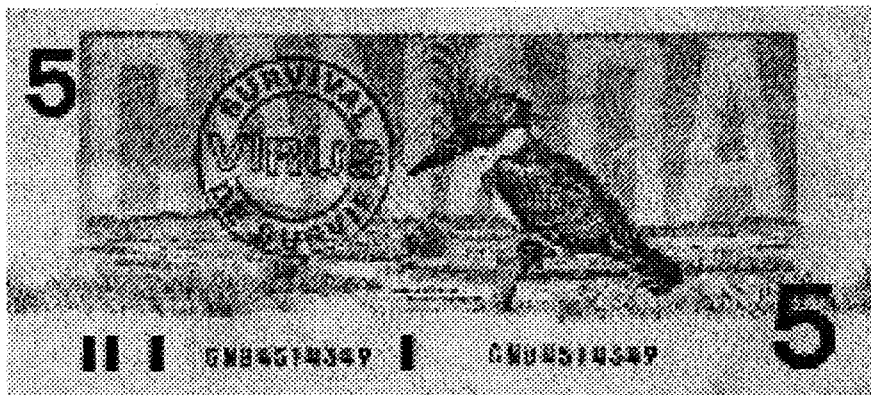
ceci n'est pas une pipe

Feature curated by
Mathieu Beauséjour

More recently this use of text in a visual art object; painting, photograph, sculpture or installation, has become a central mechanism in what has been labeled postmodernist art practice - a particular practice perhaps best recognized in the work of artists such as Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Victor Burgin or Lawrence Weiner. Appropriating strategies from journalism, news photo-captioning, advertising and other mass media these artists splash slogans across photographs or create works that more often resemble graphic design and typography than they do traditional fine art. Kruger's marriage of photography and agit-prop as in, for example, "Admit nothing/Blame everyone/ Be bitter" could, if stumbled across in a magazine, initially seem to be an ad. This is hardly surprising, however, when one bears in mind Kruger's ongoing, and often unsuccessful, critique of both her own position within the arts establishment and that establishment itself as a self-defined market, but it does not entirely explain the position of the objects, and discourses, she makes.

Roland Barthes argues in *Image Music Text* that joining text to image can result in an effect of either anchorage or relay. "Anchorage", in this argument, is a case in which the text serves to fix a fundamentally ambiguous image, where "relay" refers to a relationship of complementarity between image and text. Despite the reductive either/or binarism implicit in this model it does provide a useful starting point for encountering a text-based visual art.

Traditionally the visual arts have been perceived as transparent - what is depicted - colour, space, organization, even the Benjaminian "aura" - was what was there. The relationship of the viewer of art to the art was one of the



Survival Virus de Survie, 1991-95
Stamped dollar bill put back in circulation after the serial number has been recorded on a data bank, 152mm X 69mm

Mathieu Beauséjour is a conceptual artist. He has shown his *VIRUS* at: Quartier Éphémère, Montréal; Musée de la poste, Paris; Carl Davis Gallery, Ottawa and in many wallets and banks. He has also published stuff in various magazines such as *GAZ MOUTARDE*, *INTER*, *imposture*/*POST* and he makes great lentil soup.

ceci n'est pas une pipe

gaze, one "looked at" art, which is to say one's interaction with it was passive, one simply soaked up what was already there, given in the object. The introduction of text into an object subverts the assumption of transparency, makes explicit what has always been the case, that one reads a work of art. What Linda Hutcheon says of photography is true of all visual art, but more clearly demonstrated in that which incorporates textual messages.

"Postmodern photographic art, which often mixes the verbal with the visual, is also implicated in another debate that has developed around the definition of the process of 'reading' photographs, for it suggests that what representational images and language share is a reliance upon *culturally determined codes* which are learned."

The Politics of Postmodernism
(emphasis Hutcheon's)

The introduction of language into the visual frame forces one to read, to interpret the more literal communication of the written text, to determine its relationship to the image, the very process of which obliges to the viewer to begin the questioning of just how she has interpreted the visual element itself. As Hutcheon suggests, visual language itself contains vestiges of a social and historical power which creates its meaning. It is this question of power which should be further addressed in Barthes' binary. His assertions suggest that language serves either a reductive or explicatory function. This seems, as Hutcheon in her criticism and so many contemporary artist's in their practice suggest, an inadequate reading.

Michael Robinson's 1995 wall carving, illustrated here, elides virtually all the distinctions between "art object" and "written text". The work here is a text, carved directly into the wall of the gallery in which it was being exhibited. Reading, "The structure of sculpting calls out to the messenger", this work positions itself so as to invert, or indeed, negate Hutcheon's formulation. It does not so much critique the reliance of visual art on a culturally coded language as position a printed text as an arbitrary visual convention, making use of it in much the same way one would use any other communicative visual convention from perspective to a religious iconography. The absence of any recognizably sculptural "object" implies the assertion that this text is, itself, sculpture — that words themselves contain a formalized, coded system that is as arbitrary - as artificial - as the fine arts, but that passes unrecognized as such. It is, much as the written text suggests, the "structure of sculpting", the visual form, the wall, gallery space and specificity of the act of viewing art that calls out, that speaks. Language itself is subsumed into the sculptural - eliminating the binarisms that animate both Hutcheon's and Barthe's critiques.

The strategies of Mathieu Beauséjour's work take a quite different tack. For over four years now



Un homme se blesse en tuant sa famille
J'ai eu des pensées toute la journée (p.14)
Éditions du Phylactere, 1991

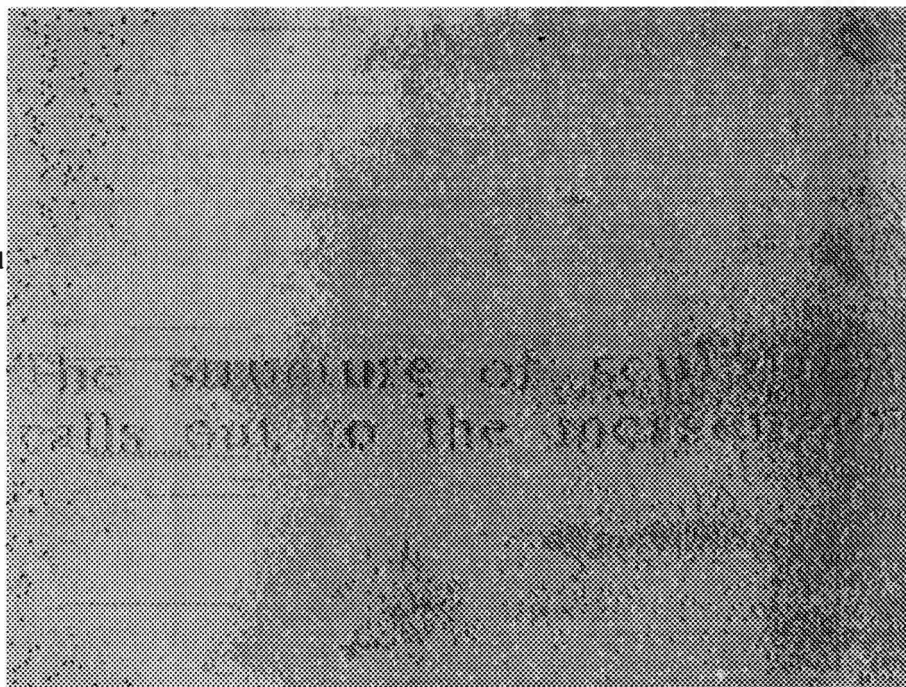
Siris is a cartoonist. He has published *J'ai eu des pensées toute la journée* (Éditions du Phylactere 1991) and *Baloney* (GO GO GUY Productions 1995). His Stuff can also be found in the pages of *MACINTAC* (Mtl) and *La MONSTRUEUSE* (France). He's especially renowned for his chili con carne.

Beauséjour has stamped every bank note to pass through his hands with the words "Survival Virus de Survie". Although these words clearly echo William Burrough's famous observation that language itself is a virus, the more compelling cultural work of this text-based art is to be found in the way it subverts the unquestioned normalcy of currency as an economic placeholder. These bank notes of Beauséjour's, much like yours and mine, change hands at bars and stores, between friends and strangers, and with each change of hands the words are read. The exchange of money is denaturalized and becomes an act of communication. Information is communicated, and, in the framework of the artist's project, a "virus" is communicated, but more importantly, each change of hands becomes a dialogue in which the money itself becomes a very different medium of exchange than merely the Bank of Canada's promise to pay.

ceci n'est pas une pipe

The work of Jean-Sébastien Huot and Siris focus themselves on language's narrative function.

Huot's endlessly reiterated stick figures move through a linguistic landscape in which Magritte's verbal stand-ins reappear frequently, though unlike his they often form the traces of some "story." In the image provided here the vestiges of an unexplained violence are evoked and left deliberately unresolved. Indeed, the deliberate lack of resolution is heightened by the striking out of parts of the text - a literalized and parodic gesture towards Derrida's formulation of a language "sous rature". The phrase "As nasty as they wanna be" is coupled with an incomplete French sentence in which the most prominent word is "solitude." The relationship of the two phrases is never explained or justified and the linkages are visually established only by the naive figure standing between them. Huot implies a narrative movement but does not represent it.



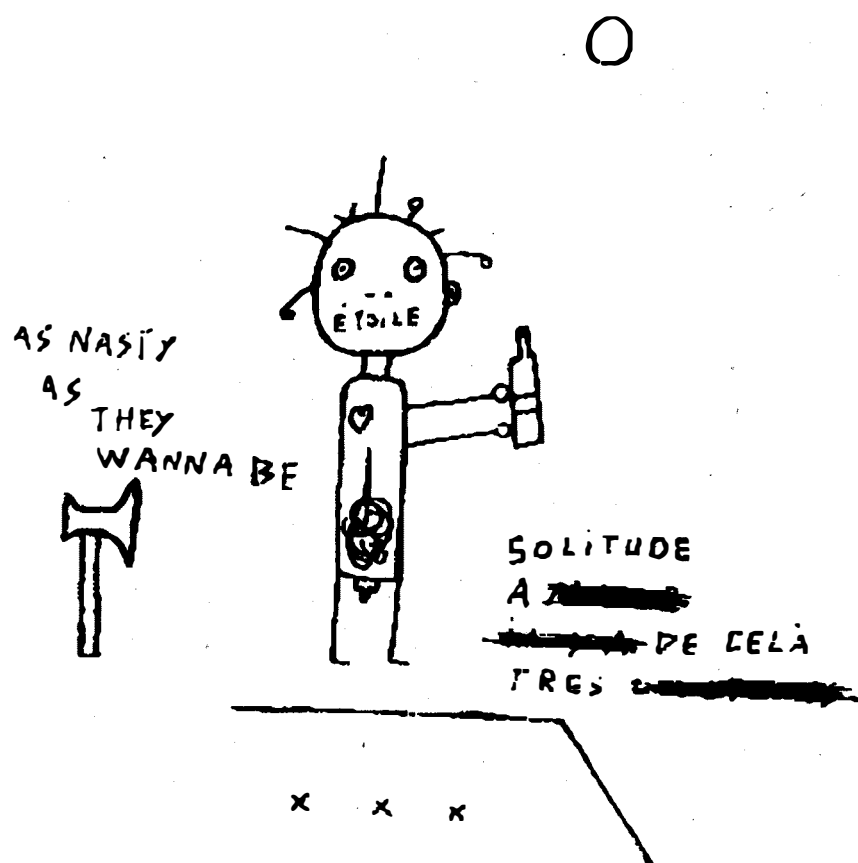
Siris' "Un homme se blesse en tuant sa famille" situates itself against the mass cultural discourses of tabloid journalism, specifically echoing the reportage of scandal sheets from *Allo Police* to the *Weekly World News*. A radically fragmented narrative is created by the use of graphic call-outs bearing a single word, or incomplete clause which can not be read in the normative straight line manner of printed text. Moreover by writing a "headline" whose central concern is the minor injury sustained by a murderer the satire of a media culture that fetishes violent criminals is more pointedly made than in a hundred "Natural Born Killers."

Hutcheon's assertion that "these postmodern text/image combinations consciously work to point to the *coded* nature of all cultural mes-

The structure of sculpting calls out to the messenger, 1995
Drywall carving
Variable dimensions

Michael Robinson is a sculptor, he has shown at Carl Davis gallery, Ottawa AXE NÉO 7, Hull Quartier Éphémère, Mtl Hopital Éphémère, Paris He is presently showing his new stuff in Rennes (France). His spécialité is Sicilian mus-sels.

ceci n'est pas une pipe



As nasty as they wanna be

Drawing published in *Élévation* (Les Herbes Rouges) 1993

Jean-Sébastien Huot is a poet and visual artist. He is the founder of the poetry magazine *GAZ MOUTARDE*, has published *Chasseur de primes* (Écrits des Forges) 1991, and *Élévation* (Les Herbes Rouges) 1993.

His visual stuff has been seen at Galerie Yves Leroux, Montréal and Ray Gun, Valencia (Spain). Making osso bucco is another of his talents.

sages" (emphasis Hutcheon's) seems a woefully inadequate truism in the light of these artist's works. Barthes' assertions of the definatory or explicatory function of text and Hutcheon's insistence on a sort of *photo-graphesis*, in which the object is merely text *and* image in some sort of arbitrary but irreducible union, both seem to insist on a regulatory positioning of such works. Both insist on a unitary *meaning* to the works. There is room to argue that one could find a more compelling reading of such work by casting back to Magritte and his "Betrayal of Images."

Beauséjour, Robinson, Huot and Siris cast language into their visual frames not to crystallize some meaning, nor even to merely underline the conventions of meaning but to multiply possible meanings. It is not the signifying text, nor the signifying image that speaks so much as the interstices between them. Language in these works does not rely on the significative power of its component words, nor on its identification with the depicted image, but on the distances between them.

The looming text carved into the gallery wall does not mean by virtue of its decipherability with a dictionary in hand - but by virtue of the specific absence of any conventionalized sculpture. It is its questioning of the very nature of sculpture that allows an answer, indeed as many answers as can be posited by a viewing subject.

Beauséjour's articulate currency likewise relies on the tensions between the arbitrary value assigned to legal tender by the presumed federal reserves and the ambiguous relationship of the word "virus" to it. The work is not saying "money" equals "virus", or "money is like a virus" so much as it is opening up a space in which to determine in what ways money *becomes* virus-like, proliferates, contaminates our exchanges- social, economic, productive. It is opening a space to ask in what ways does language become virus-like, self-propagating, dis-eased, problematized and dangerous. Text does not anchor or explain the work - it opens it up.

These works must, admittedly, be read, but that is not the same as saying they must be reduced. The critic, the viewer of such works must join with the artist not in attempting to govern meaning, but in resisting the government of meanings. It is not an art of translation, but an art of treason.

Excerpts from

Homeless in Tutonaguy

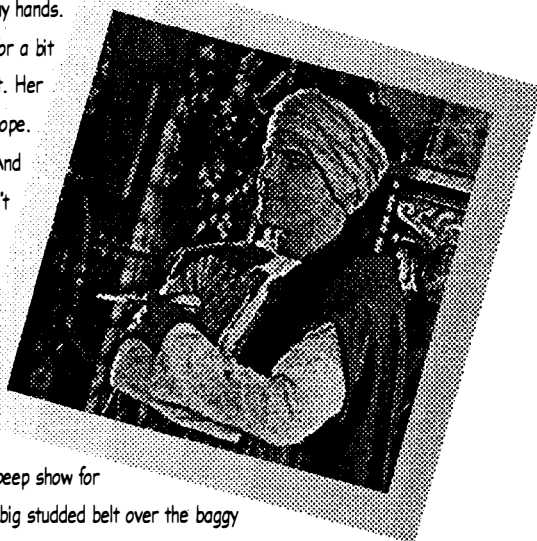
a novel in progress by Robert Majzels



Fragment 518. Blood and Sand

La Catherine just east of The Main. How did we end up back here again? She remembers the sun. And running. That makes sense, because I'm breathing as though she's been running, but no sun now, just black clouds and the air like wet dog fur. That mutt down in the Old Port. Barking at me. And hungry. Mom's home cooking: apple pie, steak and potatoes. Right. Sure. More like Kale and hash. Get dressed or get the hell out of the kitchen, you slut. Barking like a bicycle. Well, if we're down here, porn city, may as well try and make some coin, not that I hold out much hope, what with the cops and the pimps, plus you have to stay out of the way of the Spandex girls, they pretty well have the corner to themselves. And would she miss me? If they caught me? If they picked me up, would she.... Her eyelids when she sleeps. Two pale hearts beating. Perfect planets. You can watch someone dreaming. What's left for us? A bit of pavement outside the leather handbags. Leather. Black. Not the soft dull kind. Shiny. Stiff, so the edges chafe at your skin. And brand new, steaming: the smell of fresh horse shit. But not handbags for Christ's sake, people don't want nose rings and tattoos around their handbags. You'd do better outside the tattoo parlour, what with your look, or the lousy Dunkin' for shit's sake. But the girlshave got the tattoos and the cops don't like anyone working that close to their donuts. I'd let my hair grow back would she like that better? Hers, so long, so black. I love your hair. If I had hair like that... when she lets me brush it. Her eyelids when she sleeps...don't even think about it? Stay away from hope. Hope is a pimp. Just keep your eyes open, watch out for the cops. And the girls. Some girl with a stiletto heel. The thing is I swear I wouldn't touch. But why should she let me? Just a dumb punk. A Queen works alone. Queen of cruelty, Madwoman, Mother of memories. Just to watch her when she sleeps, breathe the perfume of her blood, inhale the drug

of forgetting and cross the green river, her feet asleep in my hands. Probably, this is all a waste of time. Unless some dumb het looking for a bit of SM... If I had some hair like that... when she lets me brush it. Her eyelids when she sleeps...don't even think about it? Stay away from hope. Hope is a pimp. Just keep your eyes open, watch out for the cops. And the girls. Some girl with a stiletto heel. The thing is I swear I wouldn't touch. But why should she let me? Just a dumb punk. A Queen works alone. Queen of cruelty, Madwoman, Mother of memories. Just to watch her when she sleeps, breathe the perfume of her blood, inhale the drug of forgetting and cross the green river, her feet asleep in my hands. Probably, this is all a waste of time. Unless some dumb het looking for a bit of SM... If I had some leather. Or a costume, like Rudy, stepping out of the fucking peep show for shit's sake, in that fancy Gaucho outfit, the fluffy white shirt, the big studded belt over the baggy pants like a skirt, and the shining black boots, with spurs, naturally, and that hat. Jesus, that flying saucer of a hat. Fucking Rudy, looking around to make sure no one's seen him coming out of the dirty pictures, checking his patent-leather hair, then his fly.



Note: The novel brings together a number of figures, icons, discursive myths of Western culture in the streets of contemporary Montreal where they find themselves *homeless*. These figures include Clytemnestra (wife and assassin of King Agamemnon), Lady MacBeth, Ché Guevara, Le Corbusier (the renowned Modern architect), Paul de Chomedey le sieur de Maisonneuve (founder of Montreal), Rudolph Valentino and Suzy Creamcheez (a young post-punk lesbian). The novel is divided into 36 fragments.

Slipping the hat on. With his stack of glossy eight by tens: Rudy in profile, full face, bust and full figure and, on the back, height, complexion, experience. Like some Hollywood producer would come down here for a quick dip.

We like Rudy. Sure, his act is a bit of a riot. And you have to watch his temper. Touchy but never fresh. That's what they say about Rudy. Always a gentleman. Even when he's down on his luck (and when is Rudy not down on his luck?) and even with her—no cracks, no dyke jokes, not like the others who treat her like I'm some kind of ET. Not Rudy. Always the famous smile, all teeth and old world charm, and his second hand English, right out of a phrase book. "Good day to you, Miss Creamcheez. A pleasure to see you this afternoon. We must have tea next week, yes?" and slipping into his slightly better French: "Un thé dansant chez Maxim. Ou bien le Moulin Rouge, si vous préférez." Offers one of his English cigarettes, with the monogram, RV, in gold. Where does he get them? Close up we can see the dark lines under his eyes, the thin white scar on the right cheek, pasty skin under the powder. Too much lipstick. That's Rudy, working hard to keep the show on the road.

"How's business Rudy?"

He makes a face. Doesn't like to talk about it. Gentleman dancer, Rudy, professional host, small white button on his lapel. Not some gigolo or hustler. Not some Lounge Lizard. Like there was something wrong with that. Like bussing tables in Gioletto's or taking dictation for some cigar in a suit was better. Or making googoo eyes so they can plaster you all over the big screen. But that's Rudy. The King of Romance. Lights her cigarette with a gold plated lighter. A flash of the platinum slave bracelet. A gift from Natasha. Turns his head to follow some John cruising down the street. Is it the John or the Cadillac? With Rudy you never know. Likes cars, Rudy does. Once owned eight of them, if you believe him, including the famed Voisin open touring car with steel grey couchwork, vivid red leather upholstery and the cobra embossed on the radiator cap. Big spender,

Rudy. Even when he's broke (and when is Rudy not broke?). And not a stingy bone in his body. Give you the shirt off his...but never mind that. Keep your shirt on, Rudy.

On his way to pick up the mail. There'll be none. There never is. Nothing from Natasha. Nothing from Ullman. George, the Manager. The Organizer. The tango tour, \$7000 a week dancing for face powders and beauty clay. With Natasha. Stepping off the boat in Montreal. The crowds. How they loved his French. And the tango finale. Not like the first time he set foot on the quay at New York, homeless immigrant, lousy wop. Any day now, he expects a letter from Ullman. From Natasha. Monday to Friday, Rudy goes by general delivery. "It is something to do, no?" He smiles. That smile again. "Something to look forward to."

Hope is a pimp, Rudy.

"I am immune to disappointment. I have even developed something of a taste for the bitter root."

The Cadillac comes around again. So not a John after all. A local pimp. And an asshole. Leans out of the car. "Hey, pretty boy."

Oh shit. Lousy pimp. They do it on purpose. Just for a laugh. Suzy makes a grab for Rudy's sleeve, but he's already in the street, going after the car and stripping off his shirt.

The pimp keeps calling: "Come on, powder puff."

The traffic backs up at the light and Rudy whacks his palm down on the trunk of the Cadillac. The asshole doesn't like that. He steps out of the car. "Don't touch the car, fairy."

Rudy stands there, barechested: "Come, we'll see who is the real man."

Now the whores jump in. "Pretty little Rudy." They know what it does to him. Like pushing a button. Hooting and whistling. "Beautiful gardener's boy."

Rudy turns on them, then back to the asshole. He's

not sure which way to go. Like teasing a cat with a string. Suzy steps in front of him. "Never mind, Rudy. Let's go pick up the mail."

Too late. Can't hear her. Gone all buggy-eyed, big close up. Baring his chest. "Is this the body of a powder puff?" And whacking the trunk again.

The asshole moves away from the door, showing them the tire iron in his hand. "I told you not to touch the car."

Rudy assumes proper position *a la* Marquis de Queensbury Rules.

"Pretty boy. Pretty little Rudy." The whores. And then they see the tire iron and they stop singing. "Aw, can't you leave him alone, Charlie. He ain't done nothing."

Suzy steps up, as though she were drawn to the iron.

The pimp laughs. "Look at this, now he's hiding behind a dyke. Get out of the way, sawed off hairless cunt."

Cunt. Hairless cunt. She lunges, not even thinking about the knife tucked in her boot, kicking instead for the balls. Feels the iron glance off her shoulder. Swings her fists and screaming her head off. Cunt hairless cunt hairless cunt hairless cunt... It's the screaming that puts him off more than the pummeling. Freezes him, freezes everyone on the street—the whores, the pimp, the passing students, Rudy. All frozen. By the immensity of her rage.

And even in full flight outside my body soaring in the pure white weightless sky of rage cunt she knows they are frozen cunt she knows she has won and she can had better come down now or risk the worst cunt. I keep going anyway, just a moment longer, open throat—cunt soaring just a little higher, coasting on the sound of my own voice, the empty sky, the clear white waves of power flowing over her, through her, like some perfect drug cunt. Just a little longer, one more second. Okay all right that's it I'm done it's over I'm

okay everything is fine I'm okay now we'll

just go now. Never mind.

Forget it. Come on.

Rudy. Come. On.

We're. Going.



reviews

Secret Sharers—Flout Gender

Trish Salah
desire high heels red wine
 foreword: Sue Golding
 Insomniac Press, 1995

"[R]emembering our memories, and with them, our mutating skins, in the strongest sense of the word: to remember and therewith recreate a 'something' more fluid and slimey than that old standard-bearer, that one dimensional shell-game, that straight-jacket identity called lesbian or gay."

—Sue Golding

The four writers featured in *desire high heels red wine*, Sonja Mills, Sky Gilbert, Margaret Webb and Tim Archer, each offer up uniquely fraught and frivolous erotics/politics/poetics in partial elaborations of dramatically disrupted lesbian and gay identities post the advent of that insistently open sign, the "queer". But you don't give up an identity, or a life, so easily and playfully as all that and the move to slip out one's skin, to float gender effects and sexual affect, while brave and beautiful, is not without its frictions. Sometimes eruptions. None of these writers make any promises that this is a painless thing, nor is it less braided with strange pleasures than you might think.

And *desire high heels red wine* is chock full of strange pleasures. In Margaret Webb's "Memories Of Beef" a sensibility both wry and sensual foils any overly earnest political critique, without disavowing political critique. Tracing nuances of desire and complicity in open-ended lines, double edged enjambment she stages the doubleness and elisions that under-

cut any identity. Gorgeously. another time the girl from the back seat and I are sitting with a group of girls under a tree in a meadow

we are older so the thickening of skins on our chests is thicker

and some of us are pretending to be guys and the rest of us are pretending to be girls

either way

because of the pretending

it's not lesbian

•

after this she grew up

after this she fell in love with her Arab-Jewish boyfriend and got married

after this she started running into the girl from the back seat of the car at the oddest of moments

"When All She Intended Was Blue Sky"

From the ambivalently het desires (dramatically) under erasure in Tim Archer's unabashedly, and fabulously, sentimental short story "Closure," to the snarky cynical opposition of nostalgia and forward-looking

political will in Sonja Mills dialogic piece, a conversation —

b You draw lines. Not in the same places that moral non-sodomites might draw lines, but you draw them. Pro-choice feminists are good. Anti-porn feminists are...

a Frustrated hags who just need a good fuck.

b Precisely. And you want women to be women, except you want them to be the kind of women that you want them to be, not the kind of women that zealots and Nazis want women to be.

— these fictions effectively deny any normalizing tendency in what might be ascribed the mainstream of Gay and Lesbian writing.

In all Insomniac offerings, layout is key as writers and designers collaborate in conceiving a vision to text. Though the design for each section of the book is attractive and effective in complimenting the text, I think the most successful collaboration happens with Andy Park's design to Sky Gilbert's poetry. Park's work superimposes and interstices cartoon images figuring normative types (Lana Turner-esque sexy blondes, Dickensian scullery maids and paupers, fusty salesmen and G-men) with grainy digitized porn shots of hard bodied men hard at play. Layering sexy queer kitsch, "straight" but camp caricatures and Sky's own discourse of appropriated pleasures (the joys of being Lana, of sucking off the teat of Thornton Wilder) comically inverts the heterosexist presumption of a prior, straight social order. In effect, the design amplifies and articulates what may be the boldest claim made in *desire high heels red wine*, the intractable queerness that is the secret sharer in the most hetero imposture, and vice versa.



Corey Frost

The Last Word

edited by Michael Holmes

Insomniac Press, 1995

Please ignore the ridiculous blurb on the inside cover of *The Last Word*: "the anthology nobody wanted to let you read." And for the most part you can skim through the introduction by editor Michael Holmes. He makes some good and moderately brave points about the corporate interest in a "spoken word" phenomenon, but neglects to discuss any aspects of what really connects contemporary writing. Despite his lament that "hip" poetry today is too often pyrotechnics without substance, devoid of "craft and actual magic," his characterization of what this "generation" of poets has to say is largely substance-less itself. Although he sometimes thinks Canada is a country of 30 million poets, he reserves an exalted space for those poets who have learned their craft, sacred incantations and magical places. I don't like hearing poets likened to magicians, there's nothing new about it, it smacks of tradition and obfuscation.

But please, once you have plunged through to the poems, don't ignore anything. *The Last Word* is filled with almost always very good and usually excellent writing. As a balanced representation of what's going on across the country... well, it's not. There is not much immigrant experience in this book. And it may be a bit Toronto-centric, but then so is Canadian literature in general. As for the importance of satellite voices and the death of centrism, what I like about this Toronto book is that it is conceived and published by **insomniac press**, a glossy and ambitious new press that nevertheless has loads of integrity. For the past couple of years they've been sticking their necks out on wide-distribution books, like *desire digh beels red wine*, featuring new writers. In their own affluent way they have been skirting a fringe with broadsides and funky design, and this book may be the one that creates nation-wide recognition for their niche. *The Last Word* is aware:

the queer content is not token, the graphics on every page are fun, and any fond nostalgia is usually for the 80's, not the 60's. I'd like to think the cover blurb is similarly self-conscious.

I was thrilled by the poetry, my favourites being Lynn Crosbie who is brilliant as always, Jeff Derksen, Sonja Mills' prepubescent S&M story, Darren Wershler-Henry's "lower-glyph": patterned chaos of letters like paint. (I don't know how he does these, but whatever it is I'm willing to forgive.) Dennis Denisoff, Matthew Remski's organ narrative, Evelyn Lau. In short, Holmes has drawn together a consistently pleasing gang for which I have a lot of enthusiasm, that sometimes makes me wonder if the concept of "generation" may have some tenor after all.

All Heck Breaking Loose

Peter Dubé

In Hell's Belly

editor Helen Siwak

Hell's Pyre 1995

"In Hell's Belly", published out of Vancouver, is an example of a certain kind of success. The writing is competent, a little sophomoric, sometimes funny and often in need of editing, while visually, it has a non-committal feel that seems to hesitate between proper desk topping and classic 'zine chaos. It's a lot easier to read than, let's say, the late and much lamented "JDs" which asked you to work hard but followed through with a pay-off for your efforts.

The most recent number, 13—"The Sensuality Issue," features a range of theme specific material. Included are a piece on sex during the various stages of parenthood (i.e. pregnancy, post-partum sex, etc.), a piece on impotence, one on divorce, a fun questionnaire on gender identity that was so compelling I started to answer it, before deciding I wasn't ready for that kind of commitment, and reviews of music and erotica. The material, safe and accessible overall, indicates a generous, if not down-right loose, under-


standing of the term "sensuality". Relatedly, there are items which might be read as, so to speak—"sensual", like the "Why I am a Rock Star" feature with its Prince-punning nudie centrefold.

And there's a whole lot of advertising in the mix as well, which prior to the fatal arrival of success, would have been anathema in a 'zine. The really sad news about this, though, is that the advertising is the sexiest thing in this supposedly sexy issue. It, at least, is explicit.

Bob Black said it first—the 'zine milieu is dead. It's more than likely true, and the odd exception floating around doesn't disprove it, they're just the walking wounded. Other people have added to Bob's pronouncement, saying that success was what killed the scene anyway—that it just got too big and the really interesting—idiosyncratic—cranky—or quirky—rags got lost in a shuffle of more and more of

the same. 'Zines started out from a DIY conviction that anybody could be a publisher and did

their job so well people started to believe it. But never mind, the folks at "In Hell's Belly" know that, I suspect. They're doing a good, solid job of covering the "alternative" scene in Vancouver - just like anybody could.



the MAD HATTER

JUST A BLOCK AWAY!
CHEAP STUDENT PRICES
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reviews

The Underground Press Store is a nomadic event conceived and organized by Colin Christy of ga press and Tally Abecassis of Elyrium. The store was set up for the index benefit as well as the VoxHunt a few days later. Small, independent presses from Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto had a chance to sell their wares and create exposure. UPS ended up moving seventy individual comics, chap books, zines and journals. All profits went directly to the presses themselves. Although a very positive force for independent publishing UPS was unfortunately a one shot deal, index has chosen to try to extend that force by reviewing and giving exposure to some of the titles featured at UPS.

The Johnny Steam pamphlets
James Spyker
aw687@freenet.carlton.ca

Johnny Steam is the disgruntled 90's everyman, the prototypical slacker: "Johnny Ice of the 70's, Johnny Water of the 80's, became Johnny Steam of the 90's (by induction)". Spyker presents his life as a series of fragmented stories through the medium of free pamphlets. The stories are like dreams you would have in the back seat of a car travelling all night across the country. Johnny Steam meets a black woman at the Dunkin Donuts who is really Jorge Luis Borges. Johnny Steam has "mis-trusted his own judgment ever since he noticed that when he contemplated suicide he dreamed of all the sympathy dates it would get him". Johnny Steam's goal in life is to invent a new word. He thinks that "Jack Kerouac is a fuckin' poser". Johnny Steam is the product of a post-Nuclear family. These fragments are witty, original, and probably the product of a late night, drug-addled brain. The fact that the pamphlets are free further increases their attraction. Some of the stories here, especially "Carnage, A Love Story" would be well worth paying for.

-Andy Brown

*Fragments from
A Penetrated Man*
Glenn Gear
a winking sphincter production
1995
\$2

Being a former Cub Scout myself this wonderful chap book opened my eyes to the underlying homoeroticism implicit within the activities intended to socialize little boys. Gear deconstructs The Cub Book by interspersing these activities with pictures and textual fragments commenting on the nature of the body and desire. For example, the game "Fire! Fire!" is played out as follows:

"Boys remove their caps, neckerchiefs, sweaters, socks and shoes, pile them neatly and lie down beside them. On the call of 'Fire! Fire!' all get up and dress. The first Cub properly dressed is the winner. Try this game sometime with the lights out." Activities like this one cause the mind to reel at the possibilities contained within young boys who are just beginning to discover their own self/sexuality.

Penetration becomes the splitting open of this self into homosexual understanding. This chap book is a true example of a deconstruction that does not get lost in theory. The "Fragments" play off each other well. Beside a toilet stall image of a man, devoid of everything except gender, is the definition of "penetrate" which includes: "find access into", "suggesting sensitivity or insight", as well as "to make way". I think everyone should definitely "make way" for this chap book on their bookshelves. -AB

Rummaging for Rhinos
Joe Blades
Pooka Press 1995
\$3

Joe Blades strikes me as the type of person who, when crossing a border and asked about his occupation, would respond with a capital P, Poet without recognizing the irony. He writes about scallops, cockroaches and rats but they come off as being about scallops, cockroaches and rats. They strain to be something more but they're not. Oh sure, there are some good lines but they become drowned out by poetic masturbation. A little more editing may have saved this chap book. For example: "Or the phone unplugged / Fax/modem squealing in your ear / while I hear nothing / Unplugged / Without electric guitars / Hippy hair hanging over the keyboard /... The anti-hero dies again / The unknown poet"...

See what I mean? On second reading the last two poems (including the title piece) are not bad but they certainly don't warrant an entire chap book. Better that Blades remains, "The unknown (capital P) Poet". -AB

*Dollar Stories: An Anthology of
Montreal Poetry*
edited by Ibi Kaslik
Queen's Press 1995
\$3

When I picked up this well designed chap book I fully expected to read about people's experiences in Dollar Stores. Surely everyone has a tale to tell. Alas, this was not to be. However, the chap book itself is like a Dollar Store in that there are some great finds and some kind of cheap stuff. One stand out is ardesa jesseau's opening poem about a deer and a car that is not really about a deer and a car. It's a poem about speed and leaving lovers behind in your dust: "your one mile an hour is symbolic / of your existence". However, one must be wary of the deer in the middle of the road which can bring everything to a crashing halt. A metaphorically rich poem.

Also amy zidulka's poem "Pets" is fantastic. She equates the cleaning up after a party with the dislocation of a relationship gone sour to good effect: "Here, the balloons / from our goodbye celebration / hover like a tragedy". Apparently she is also "the founder of 'Designated Driver Appreciation Day' whereby all the participants get rip-roaring drunk and walk home". The bio page at the back is downright hysterical.

ibolya kaslik also writes of relationship but from the other end; the "fumbling", the "shadow boxing yr jaw / with my eyes", the fearful beginning. When not editing chap books she is "busy designing the World's Biggest Waterslide". Perhaps the poets she has featured in her anthology could have a

nice cathartic swoop in the water. Sliding poets forgetting about balloons and deer and all those ubiquitous relationship traumas. Some of the poets, who express great depth here, may find the shallow end invigorating. Later, dripping wet they can all buy balloons at the Dollar Store. Although lacking in any tales about Dollar Stores, this fine chap book is a great deal all the same. AB

Issue Zero \$4.95

I'd like to say that I enjoyed this zine... I'm sorry I can't do that. Truth be told, when I picked up *Issue Zero*, I had high expectations because I am the kind of girl who ~~does~~ judge a book by its cover... and the cover was a colorful pastiche of appropriated images and grainy fonts. But the playful jumble of the front cover was more than an aesthetic choice, it seems representative of the way the zine works. There is altogether too much appropriation in this mag. It doesn't seem that this appropriation is in the service of some greater purpose. Not that this kind of cutting and pasting is without its charms, but the signal to noise ratio between editorial content and cut and pasted text is pretty high. The comic of Enrico Swave was a little flaccid. I liked the use of black and negative space and the way it was spread through the mag - but the narrative progression was less rewarding. There's one interesting piece called "Feedbacchus," which starts out on an interesting note: it begins as a narrative then shifts into a deconstruction of communication, perspective and "Truth". I only wish it had used the narrative device a little more, weaving back and forth between analysis and storytelling. The only real praise I can give this 'zine, is the presence of twisted yoda-like platitudes that appear on the bottom of most pages. These post-axiomatic era quotes range from "Just give me an L-word that gives me some hope, and I promise I won't get so stoned" to "LEFT only with lethargy, loser and lame, I'm lacking the will or the time." But, in short, I think that the time spent raising the money for this mag's glossy printing would be better spent focusing on editorial content.

- Buffy Bonanza

The Moon and The Stars Debra Goldblatt M&M Publications

Debra Goldblatt's chapbook, "The moon and the Stars" strikes me as a promising tome. There's just a handful of poems with topics ranging from sex to, well, sex. Actually, there's more, but there's a *lot* of sex. And she manages the topic admirably. My favorite piece is "Friendship", about the maddening progression of banal life. She hits the mark when she allows the rhythm to carry her and the reader into a heady scramble of images and hard rhymes like, "*Learning about butting out, losing out, backing out, freaking out, hiding out. Butting in, listening in, staying in, ordering in, we did everything that was in.*" I wanted the whole poem to read like that, but she wanders into a more prosaic voice that seems awkward and self-conscious. Another piece entitled, "In Fifteen lines or less" chronicles the various sites of sexual transgression she has shared with her lover. It culminates with a stanza that muses, "*But of all these spots I cherish, If I had to chose the fairest, sitting on your face, is my favorite place.*" I'm not usually a fan of the simple rhyme but I like this, it's not unaware of its own simplicity. She very consciously subverts the naive rhyme scheme. While not every poem is as successful as these two, the book left me with a sanguine curiosity, and a mental note to keep my eye out for her future work. - BB

Fuse Volume 18 #5 \$4.50

A fuse is a fuse is a fuse. Fuse is one of those magazine that seems to have been around forever but oddly enough, not many people outside of Toronto seem to read. This special issue examines the connection between art and activism, community, identity, technology and other such topics. There's a nice juxtaposition of articles here, from a Back to School article, examining the shift toward commercialism common in art school today, to an look n of the draconian cuts in public arts funding. It's a lovely mag to flip through, aesthetically interesting, just as one would expect from a art mag. The most interesting piece is about aids activism in Montreal, by Robert W.G. Lee that chronicles Montreal's apathic response to the crisis

and its languid march to activism. Well written and sadly on the mark. This is a weighty mag for the most part. One cannot just wander into its pages and expect to pick up the discursive fabric without a bit of a struggle. If you are looking for articles that read with the ease of fine literature, then let your hand wander past Fuse and on to a less political missive. If you want to engage a little, slap down the \$4.50 and slip on your reading glasses. -BB

degrassZiNE
c/o Joanne,
4 Baraniuk Street,
St. Catharines, ON
L2N 1N5

\$1
wake up in the morning/ feelin' shy and lonely/ gee I gotta go to school — DJH theme

Degrassi does not suck. People will try to tell you it does. Friends will laugh derisively when you analyze your life and relationships in Degrassi terms — "Hey, this is just like the time that Caitlin..." But when you spot Snake at a Blockbuster video in your neighbourhood, said friends will lose their cool completely. They will clutch your arm and confess their deepest Snake fantasies. This kind of thing happens all the time.

degrassZiNE, the UPS best-seller "that worships the degrassi street that degrassi kids walk on," does not suck either. Here are some reasons why:

- it's thought-provoking: "why isn't degrassi a full-time syndicated show and family matters is on all the time?" "did spike dye her hair for degrassi, or was her hair the reason she was picked for the show?"
- it's educational: did you know that the zit remedy is "zits enragés" in french?
- it will trigger a flood of mid-eighties TV nostalgia. Soon you will be yearning for the days of Samantha Taylor's Video Hits.
- it features lower-case spelling and lots of exclamation marks!
- its relentless adolescent kitsch (hockey hair and too-tight jeans) will make you feel so much more secure about your present-day self.
- it only costs a dollar.
- Tracy Bohan

Word is

Saturdays, November 4 & 18

Yawp! & Whitman scion Jake Brown (in addition to being a spoken word impressario, the man teaches English and does a mean Solomon Grundy impression) present **Saturday Nights at Bistro 4**, biweekly. The bill this month includes performances by Ran Elfassy, Julie Chrysler, Chris Bell, Scott Duncan, Ed Fuller and at least two² friends. 9 pm @4040 St-Laurent. To find out who's on when check out listings (below).

Tuesday Nov. 14

Vox Hunt- will you be the next slam champ? There can be only one... In an effort to restore poetry to the public sphere the Vox Hunt team has been hosting theme nights. Last month's slam featured performance by the brother of an elected official in favour of a "No" vote, as well as pro-

separatist poetry by Todd Swift. This month they take on the Q-Spell nomination list and some of its conspicuous omissions: music by the Buzz Blast Off Trio, with twisting for beer, Elizabeth Peavy AKA Action Girl, mc Todd Swift, Ian Stephans and more... \$3 (\$5 for slammers); sign up at 7:30, the shows starts after 8 @ Café So, 20 Rachel O.

Tuesday, Nov. 21

Sad; so sad, those smoky-rose, smoky-mauve evenings of northern Autumn, sad enough to pierce the heart. In such times one could do worse than to lose one self to the charms of an amethyst. Amethyst tuesdays is an eclectic salon-style lounge featuring performances, exhibits, invitee djs and a cocktail included in the cover. Hosted by Atif Siddiqi & Salmon M. Husain on the 3rd tuesday of every month @ 8:00, *La Huerta*, 1355 Ste Catherine east.

Listings spelled

Nov. 2

Bistro 4, Call Jake at 843-6529.

6-8 pm.

McGill Friends of the Library presents, *The Female Body in the Mind's Eye* by **Patricia Williams** at the Frank Dawson Adams Auditorium. There will be a Conference the following day, Nov. 3 at the McGill Faculty Club from 8:30am-5:30 pm.

3:30-5 pm.

Thursdays at Lonergan. **Ronald Wareham**, *The Mythological Dimension of History*. Lonergan, 7302 Sherbrooke West, 848-2280.

Nov. 2-12

from Thurs.-Sun., 9:30 pm.

My Business is Words: interpretation of Anne Sexton's poetry for the stage. Studio 303. Ste Catherine & Bleury \$10. For info and reservations please call 484-1973.

Nov. 4

9 pm.

YAWP presents **Saturday Nights at Bistro 4** with Julie Chrysler, Chris Bell, Scott Duncan, and Ran. Music by Ed Fuller and Conrad Sichler.

9pm.

Urban Wanderers Reading Series presents, **Daytrips: 24 hour fiction** with Lesley Battler, Julie Keith, T.F. Rigelhoff, and Raymond John Woolfrey. Bistro 4, For info call 484-3186. Proceeds go to RECLAIM.

6-8 pm.

Public lecture: *Racism, Nationalism, and Globalization* given by **Dr. Anthony Richmond**. Concordia Faculty Club lounge, Hall Building, H-767. Call 848-8728 for more info.

8 pm.

McGill Friends of the Library's **Hugh MacLennan Memorial Lecture: The Book in Canada Today: A Publisher's Perspective**, featuring Douglas Gibson, chief editor of McClelland and Stewart. Leacock 232,

Nov. 6

3:30-5 pm.

David Eley presents *Benjamin and Electronic Images*. Lonergan, 7302 Sherbrooke W, 848-2280.

Nov. 12

10 am.

Paragraphe and The Gazette present **Books and Breakfast** featuring Peter Newman, Rohinton Mistry, Greg Gatenby, and Karen Connelly. Ritz Carlton, \$20 + GST. 845-5811.

Nov. 13

9 pm.

Urban Wanderers Reading Series presents **The Long March: Communism in Quebec** with Dan Daniels, David Fennario, Gordon Lunan and Merrily Weisbord. Bistro 4, For info call 484-3186. Proceeds go to RECLAIM.

Nov. 14

8 pm.

VoxHunt Slam. Ian Stephens & a Special Tribute to Voices not Heard by QSPELL: Lieutenant General's Awards, at Cafe So, Slam sign up at 7:30 at a cost of \$5 with a \$105 prize. \$3 admission to non-slammers. Also,

Nov. 9

289 2031 - Dec 19
Portfolio
Subm. 12:00pm
Jan 30

Elizabeth Peavy, AKA Action Girl: 1995 National Slam finalist, live music, dance contest, and of course MC Todd Swift with house band Buzz Blast-Off Trio. Call Dan at 843-5350.

Nov. 15

12-1:30 pm.

Minority Women in Academe presented by Dr. Shahrzad Mojab. Concordia's McConnell Building Seminar room LB-677, 848-8728.

Nov. 16

3:30-5 pm.

Leonard Mendelsohn presents *A World Without Shylock: Act V of The Merchant of Venice*. Loneragan, 7302 Sherbrooke W, 848-2280.

Nov. 17

8 pm.

Eighth Annual QSPELL Awards Gala Reception. Hotel de Ville, 275 Notre Dame East, \$10. For info call 933-0878.

Nov. 18

9 pm.

YAWP presents Chris Bell reading from his new serialized novel, Chicago Beau, and Finn Makela. Music by Norm Dionne, Tracey Morgan, and S.H.A.G. Bistro 4. Call Jake at 843-6529.

Nov. 19

10 am.

Paragraphe and The Gazette present *Books and Breakfast* featuring Richard Gwyn, Erna Paris, and Jacques Godbout. Ritz Carlton, \$20 + GST. 845-5811.

Nov. 20

3-4 pm.

Pierre Berton signing copies of *My Times: Living with History 1947-1995*. Double Hook, 932-5093.

8 pm.

Public Domain presents "*How did I get so anal?*": *Queer Self-authorization at the Margins*. Marci Frank talks on autobiographical strategies in local comic art. H-537, Hall Building, 1455 de Maisonneuve O.

Nov. 23

3:30-5 pm.

Robert Nagy presents, *A Nikon is an Icon is an Ikon*. Loneragan, 7302 Sherbrooke W, 848-2280.

Nov. 26

Last Sunday of every month

A Multi-Disciplinary Event featuring music, video, theatre and poetry in both English and French. Organized by Mitsiko and happening at Bistro 4. For info 282-6689 or mitsiko@sim.qc.ca

Nov. 30

3:30-5 pm.

Savithri de Turreil presents, *Gandhi and Women*. Loneragan, 7302 Sherbrooke W. For info call 848-2280.



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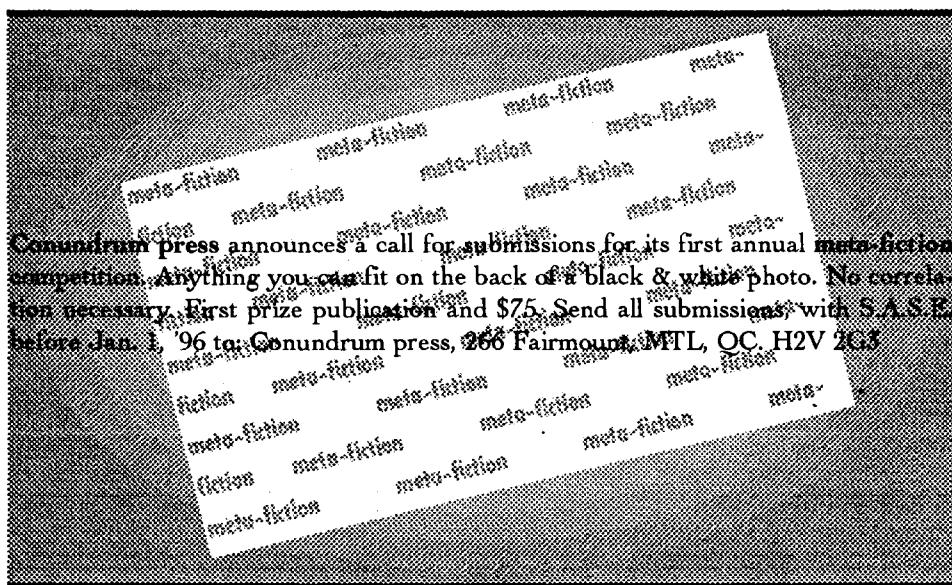
Programme	Station	Time	Host	Content
Grey Matters	CKUT 90.3 FM	Thurs 7-8PM	Fortner Anderson.	Lectures.
Dromostexte	CKUT 90.3 FM	Thurs 8-9PM	Fortner Anderson.	Spoken Word
Books on Jewish Themes	CKUT 90.3 FM	Tues 7PM	Stanley Asher	Reviews.
Simply Speaking	CINQ 102.3 FM	Sat 10:00AM	Stanley Asher	Interviews.
Books on Popular Culture	CINQ 102.3 FM	Sat 9:30AM	Stanley Asher	Reviews.
Between the Covers	CBC 940 AM	Mon-Fri 10PM	Serialized novel readings.	
Saturday Spotlight	CBC 940 AM	Sat 5:08PM	Shelley Pomerance	Arts in Quebec.
Writers & Company	CBC 940 AM	Sun 3PM	Eleanor Wachtel	Literary figures.
Selected Shorts	WCFE 91.9 FM	Thurs 11AM	Actors read acclaimed short stories.	
Word Jazz	WCFE 91.9 FM	Thurs 11PM	Ken Nordine	Spoken Word
Tell Me A Story	WCFE 91.9 FM	Fri 7 PM	Contemporary authors reading their work.	

call
submissions...

Other Muses... new women writers in montreal.

Attention all women writers: submit to the anthology *Other Muses*: new women writers in Montreal. A forum designed to energize and recognize women's talent. Established and previously unpublished writers are encouraged to submit their work — there are no

requirements in terms of theme or style. Please submit 2 - 8 pages of material, poems no longer than 60 lines in length. Contact Julie Cryslar at *Other Muses*, 415 rue LeMoine, (Rez de C.) Montréal, Québec H2Y 1Y5 or julie_cryslar@baby-lon.montreal.qc.ca.



Conundrum press announces a call for submissions for its first annual meta-fiction competition. Anything you can fit on the back of a black & white photo. No correlation necessary. First prize publication and \$75. Send all submissions with S.A.S.E. before Jan. 1, '96 to: Conundrum press, 266 Fairmount MTL, QC. H2V 2G3

Music Stories

ga press, in conjunction with Vehicule press, is seeking out variously genred writings and graphics for a book about music, or with music in it, or in your life. Send cool or geeky stuff to:

ga press 3997 Coloniale, H2W 2B9 or contact Colin at 286-9950.

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index has an estimated readership of 10000 people, all of whom read. Next issue our call for submissions section will be incorporated into a classified section serving writers, translators, typists, tutors, agents, etc... If you are any of those things you'll probably want to list with us. Just think, 10000 people who read— at 10¢ a word how can you go wrong? To list, call Daegan now @ (514) 525-3325

ind ex

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november 1995

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